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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practicum was to test the belief that a need existed for a two-year associate degree program at Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College in the area of Human Services. A questionnaire was developed and mailed to 25 community agencies, of which 78 percent responded. Results of the survey showed that nine of the responding agencies provided an inservice training program for workers with less than a four-year college degree, and three of the agencies reported that their programs met all of their training needs; agencies that did not provide training programs and those whose programs were not adequate felt that the Jackson County Campus of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College could meet their needs; one agency felt that the college could not be of assistance, and four did not know if the college could be of assistance; four of the agencies reported that 57 employees would be eligible for job advancement if they earned a two-year degree in Human Services, and estimated that there were 22 positions open for people with such a degree; 12 agencies stated that they would accept interns enrolled in the program, 70 of which could be accepted each semester; 5 of the 12 agencies stated that they would be able to pay interns part-time wages; and 14 agencies were willing to help establish a curriculum for the program. (A copy of the questionnaire is included.) (DB)

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# AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR A HUMAN SERVICES ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAM ON THE JACKSON COUNTY CAMPUS

by

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# AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR A HUMAN SERVICES ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAM ON THE JACKSON COUNTY CAMPUS

## INTRODUCTION

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College has, for many years, been providing students with career education in business, industry and health occupations. These program are meeting the needs of a large segment of the population being served by the college. Although the administration and faculty have exerted considerable effort to become more responsive to the educational needs of its diverse and dynamic constituency, they are mindful of the fact that there are segments of its constituency that are not, as yet, being served by the college.

One of these segments appears to be the Human Service agencies in Jackson County and the prospective students who want to enter the field of Human service with less than a bachelor's degree.

The purpose of this study is an assessment of the need which the various Human services agencies in Jackson County have for the services of persons holding a two-year (associate) degree in Human services and their willingness to participate in developing and implementing a new educational program which would balance classroom activity with selected, supervised field experience.

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Both the United States Department of Labor and the National Science Foundation[1] estimate that there will be a third more social scientists in the late seventies. But this number, they suggest, can hardly meet the apparent demands society is making for social science knowledge, skills and applications. The need for fully trained social scientists far exceeds the number currently being trained. In view of these projections, it would seem fair to assume that the demand for paraprofessional personnel would also increase in somewhat the same proportion.

The need to prepare paraprofessionals in the field of human services has been perceived by a number of two-year institutions. Kellogg, et al[2] reports that a two-year technical college in New York State has inaugurated an innovative curriculum in human services designed primarily to prepare students for immediate employment in a variety of social agencies. The curriculum leads to an associate in applied science upon completion. Since a number of students will eventually seek further education at upper division colleges, the program has been designed to facilitate maxium transfer of credit to other colleges.

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[1]The Encyclopedia of Careers and Vocational Guidance, ed. William E. Hopke (Revised ed.; Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., 1972), p. 650.

[2]Richard Kellogg, George Herrick and Shirley Wurz, "People to People", Community and Junior College Journal, (April, 1974), 23 - 25.

According to Moed, et al[3] the City University of New York and New York City's Manpower and Career Development Agency are jointly sponsoring a pilot project in which students are employed as case aide trainees with the Department of Social Services. The student workers are assigned to one of three bureaus at one of forty-five different locations in the city; public assistance, child welfare or special services; each works with the department twenty hours per week and spends fifteen hours per week in the classroom. Wages and cost of study are funded through the federally sponsored Public Service Career Training Program.

Menefee[4] describes a consortium for human services made up of eight Minnesota colleges in the Twin City area. Their students earn credit and sometimes modest wages for assisting in schools, courts, park programs, mental health and rehabilitation programs, the YMCA and children's clubs. Wenatchee Valley (Washington) Community College has a "human resources laboratory" where social SCIENCE students earn credit for assisting in special education, juvenile parole, mental health and parent-child study projects. Angelina College[5] in Lufkin, Texas offers an Associate of Applied Science in Human Services. The purpose of this program is to prepare the graduate

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[3]Martin G. Moed, Thomas Carroll and Marie Stewart, "Experimenting With a Social Service Technology Program", Junior College Journal, (March, 1970), 45 - 49.

[4]Selden Menefee, "Two-Year College: In Step With Today", American Education, (December, 1973), 26.

[5]Bulletin 1973-74 no. 13, Angelina College, Lufkin, Texas.

for entry level employment in one of three of the human services fields. After completing the uniform freshman year the student will select one of the three options: (1) Mental Health/Mental Retardation Associate; (2) Social Services Associate; or (3) Teacher Aide. Each curriculum consists of a complete program of courses work in the behavioral sciences, seminars, and field work experience in an appropriate agency or institution.

In addition to the above cited programs, Change Magazine's publication, The Yellow Pages of Undergraduate Innovations,[6] lists twenty-three other human services programs being offered by undergraduate institutions throughout the country.

Cosand observes that:

> "....when one discusses career education in terms of developing saleable skills there is an inclination to believe that the concept stops there...at vocational training. This is because conventional 'wisdom' tends to drive occupational and intellectual development into opposite corners when in reality the two goals are related." [7]

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[6]George W. Bonham, ed. The Yellow Pages of Undergraduate Innovations (New Rochelle: Change Magazine, 1974).

[7]Joseph P. Cosand, " O E on Career Education", Change, (June, 1972), 7.

It is noted that in each of the above cited programs experiential learning is balanced with academic studies; a moving away from the cold, sterile detachment found in traditional programs; many of which offer little more than the abstractions found in textbooks and lectures. This departure is welcomed by the large segment of our youth who are expressing a need for involvement with the real world and its concerns. They are coming to realize, as Epstein[8] does that they have been part of a system which removes them from the "real life experience"; effectively crippling their minds and making it impossible for them to develop into well-functioning adults. And it must be noted that neovocationalism is not solely the program of political conservatives; Hitchcock[9] sees a general distrust, on both the Right and the Left, of the mere intellectual who is unable to do anything. Finch[10] sees the community college as being oriented to the new technology, to the practical sciences, and increasingly, to the development of paraprofessional desciplines...in health, in computer science, in social services and teaching itself.

If our community college functions to serve the educational needs of the community which are not being met by other existing institutions

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[8]Herman T. Epstein, "A New Agenda for School Reform", Change, (November, 1972), 33.

[9]James Hitchcock, "The New Vocationalism", On Learning and Change, (New Rochelle: Change Magazine, 1973) p. 91.

[10]Robert H. Finch, "Career Education: A Program for Community Colleges", Junior College Journal, (November, 1969), 12 - 14.

it is here where new directions can best be initiated. The community college is not tied to traditional concepts of what educational experiences are "supposed to be." It is much freer than all other educational institutions to re-evaluate and restructure the kinds of experiences which it offers its constituency; it is expected to be more responsive to the shifting needs of a rapidly changing community. So an era of rapid change will be looking to the institution which has demonstrated its receptivity to divergence and innovation.

PROCEDURE

Because of the nature of the study that was to be undertaken, the first step in the procedure was to obtain permission from the Dean of the college to conduct the intended survey. The cover letter (Appendix 1) that was mailed with the questionnaire (Appendix 2) was reviewed by the members conducting the survey and upon being approved by them, it was shown to the Dean and the intent of the survey made clear. The Dean approved the project and gave permission to proceed!

Next, the items to be included on the questionnaire were chosen. The members of the survey team discussed and worded each item. The questionnaire was then reviewed by some non-involved faculty to verify ease of marking and comprehension. It was decided that the questionnaire would be mailed, with minor revisions, to the social service agencies within the county where the college is located. The cover letter would naturally be included.

During the time required for the above, one of the members had the responibility for compiling a list of all the social service agencies within the county. After this list was compiled all members reviewed it and determined upon the number of agencies that would be contacted. This was done by examining the work done by each agency, the size of the organization, and the probability that the agency could become involved in the program as proposed. A total of twenty-five agencies were selected.

Another member of the investigating group then called each organization before the questionnaire was mailed and asked permission to mail the questionnaire and for someone to be responsible for responding to it.

This permission was obtained and the questionnaire and cover letters were mailed.

After a period of three weeks eleven questionnaires were returned in the self-addressed, stamped envelopes that were provided. A meeting was held and the responses were discussed. It was agreed that the responses obtained were adequate to warrant continuing the investigation, but it was felt that more responses were really needed, so a follow-up letter was mailed and additional questionnaires and self-addressed, stamped envelopes included.

The follow-up letter resulted in the return of seven more questionnaires. These were then complied and the results are listed below. All members of the group were involved in the compilation process and periodic meetings were held for discussion and examination of the program.

RESULTS

Of the twenty-five questionaries mailed to human service agencies in Jackson County, Mississippi, eighteen or 78% responded. A tabulation revealed the following:

1. Nine, or 50% of the responding agencies provide a formal in-service training program for workers with less than a four year degree. Seven, or 39% do not.

2. Three of the nine which do provide in-service training programs indicated that their programs met all of their training needs. Six indicated that their programs did not meet their training meeds.

3. Of the seven agencies that do not provide an in-service training program for their workers and the six whose programs were not meeting their needs, eight believed that the Jackson County Campus of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College could meet their needs. One agency did not believe that the college could be of assistance and four did not know if it could.

4. Four, or 22% of the agencies reported that fifty-seven employees would be eligible for job advancement if they held a two-year degree in Human Services.

5. The respondents employed: (a) 15 persons with less than a High School diploma, (b) 199 with a High School diploma, (c) 56 with a two-year college degree, (d) 55 with a four-year college degree, (e) 9 with a master's degree, and (f) 1 with a Ph. D. or Ed. D. degree.

6. The agencies responding estimate that there are 22 positions presently open for persons holding a two-year degree in Human Services. Projected estimates indicate a need for 26 in two years, 42 in three years and 95 in four years.

7. Four of the agencies reported that these graduates could expect an initial yearly salary of less than $ 5,000.00. Seven reported beginning salaries of between $ 5,000.00 and $ 7,000.00 and one indicated that a beginning salary would be between $ 7,000.00 and $ 9,000.00.

8. Twelve, or 67% of the agencies stated that they would accept interns enrolled in this program; three could not.

9. Seventy (70) interns could be accepted each semester by these twelve agencies.

10. Five, or 41% of the twelve agencies would be in a position to pay the interns part-time wages; seven could not.

11. Fourteen, or 78% of the respondents expressed a willingness to help establish a curriculum for this program.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study indicate that presently there exists a need, in Jackson County, for Human Service Technologists with a two-year college degree. There is further indication that this need will not only persist over the next four years, but will be considerably increased. It is therefore recommended that:

1. the central administration of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Junior College direct the investigators of this study along with the Director of Instruction and the Director of Continuing Education (Jackson County Campus) to plan and hold a meeting or series of meetings with representatives of those agencies which have indicated a willingness to participate in the formulating of a proposed curriculum for participants in this program.

2. the agenda for the meeting should include: (a) review of curricula from community colleges offering similar programs; (b) the selecting and preparing of a list of courses/experiences which could be calculated to equip students with practical skills and understanding necessary for employment; and (c) the preparation of a list of persons employed in the agencies represented who may be called upon for professional, technical or instructional assistance if and when the program is implemented.

3. the minutes of the above meeting/s be forwarded to the central administration and/or persons designated by the central administration.

4. the survey conducted in Jackson County be extended to Harrison, Stone and George counties so that constituency needs of all supporting counties can be assessed.

5. the central administration appoint an ad hoc committee to study and report on the additional cost which the program would entail if implemented.

# APPENDIX 1

With the approval of our executive dean, Curtis Davis, several of us are investigating the feasibility of developing a new, two-year (A. S.) degree program in Human Services. We are asking you to help us decide if a program of this kind would be useful to your agency, our community and the students who man elect to enroll in it.

Students electing this program would, over a two year period, be enrolled in Social Science, Psychology and other related courses, but in addition would be required to serve a two-day per week internship with a different community human service agency each of the four semesters. His/Her internship schedule would be arranged so that he/she would gain experience with a variety of human service agencies in our community.

Educational research supports the belief that supervised field experience as a supplement to classroom work helps the student to realize, more quickly, the realtionship between principles provided in the classroom and the real world of work. Student interest and motivation is, generally, maintained at a higher level when academic concepts are put to use immediately. Many of us believe that a program of this kind would turn out a more dedicated, creative and productive employee.

The kinds of experiences which this program would provide are not firmly established at this time; mainly because we are hoping that you will be willing to give us some ideas, suggestions and criticism with regard to this proposal. Please help us by answering the attached questionaire; on it you will find a place to include your own comments.

Sincerely,

Bruce Fisher
Academic Counselor
Jackson County Campus
M.G.C.J.C.

APPENDIX 2

HUMAN SERVICES ASSOCIATE

Questionaire

Agency responding_____

Name and title of person responding_____
(Name)

_____
(Title)

PLEASE CIRCLE APPROPRIATE RESPONSES WHERE POSSIBLE

1. Does you agency provide a formal in-service training program for workers with less than a four-year degree?
(Yes--No)

2. If "yes", is your program meeting all of your training needs?
(Yes--No)

3. If either of the above questions was answered "No", do you believe that the Jackson County Campus of the MGCJC could be of assistance to you in meeting your training needs?
(Yes--No--Don't Know)

4. How many of your present employees would be eligable for job advancement if they held an A. S. (two-year) degree in Human Services? _____.

5. How many persons does your agency employ with:
Less than a High School diploma? _____
A High School diploma? _____
A two-year College degree? _____
A four-year College degree? _____
A Master's degree? _____
A Ph. D. or Ed. D. degree? _____

6. Could you estimate the number of position which your agency could offer graduates of a two-year Human Services degree at present?
in 2 years? _____
in 3 years? _____
in 4 years? _____

(Human Services Associate Questionaire cont'd)

7. A person holding a two-year Human Services degree could expect to enter your agency with a yearly salary of:
   (a) below $ 5,000.00
   (b) $ 5,000.00 to $ 7,000.00
   (c) $ 7,000.00 to $ 9,000.00
   (d) above $ 9,000.00

8. Would your agency be in a position to accept interns enrolled in this program?
   (Yes--No)

9. The internship is tenatively set as two days per week for a period of twelve weeks each semester; if your answer to question # 8 was "yes", how many interns would you be able to accept each semester?
   _____.

10. Would your agency be in a position to pay part-time wages to interns?
   (Yes--No)

11. Would you, or a member of your staff, be willing to help establish a curriculum for this program if it is developed?
   (Yes--No)

COMMENTS:

(Use back of this page if necessary)

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